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SUBJECT: BRIDGING WEATHER TO CLIMATE - OES DAS REIFSNYDER MEETINGS
WITH WMO ON LEAD-UP TO WCC3

11. SUMMARY: Dan Reifsnyder, OES Deputy Assistant Secretary for Environment and Sustainable Development, met with the World Meteorology Organization's (WMO) Secretary General Michel Jarraud to discuss progress on the upcoming World Climate Conference 3 (WCC3). In a far-reaching conversation Jarraud touched on the key message of the WCC3, noted possible high-level participants, reported on the state of Group Earth Observations (GEO) and opined on a future World Environmental Organization. In another meeting, GEO Director Achache commented on the future of GEO and its role in WCC3. END SUMMARY

The World Climate Conference Three

12. At a meeting on May 13, WMO SG Jarraud noted that the previous World Climate Conferences in 1979 and 1990 had resulted indirectly in the IPCC and the UNFCCC. While the previous conferences had covered science and policy respectively, Jarraud characterized the goal of WCC3 as one of supporting decision-makers to manage risk over a period of decades in the context of climate uncertainty. In particular, Jarraud spoke of two key areas that would benefit from the discussion and outcome of the WCC3: Disaster Prevention and Adaptation. For example, decision makers in the area of food security need to know if climate variability will affect the El Nino cycle, and what that means for weather patterns in their region. A robust support mechanism requires strengthened short-term, seasonal and decadal forecasting and better dissemination of climate information to all socio-economic sectors. "The tricky part," said Jarraud, "is how to attract funding for Meteorological Services." He made the point that, "Improved near-term forecasting could benefit social services; money into Met services is an investment."

13. The private sector is also a key beneficiary of improved climate services. Decision-makers in the private sector, in particular the insurance and reinsurance industry, transportation and the commodities sector, could all benefit from short-term climate information. A more accessible mechanism for accessing short-term climate information in commodities agriculture might help level the playing field for developing countries and emerging economies competing in global agricultural markets.

14. Jarraud emphasized that no country can manage alone the risks associated with climate variability. He advocated for Regional Climate Centers and Networks as well as organized Regional Climate Outlook Fora to address both improved climate data collection and sharing. Jarraud noted that currently the regional climate fora are useful, but ad hoc and consequently their importance to the climate

change discussion is not recognized or utilized by decision-makers. Reifsnnyder urged Jarraud to make the importance of the Climate Centers and Fora a key message of WCC3, and Jarraud concurred.

15. Regarding the level of representation expected at the WCC3, Jarraud made it clear that he would be happy with 5 to 10 high-level leaders. He said that, ideally, he would like representation from an assortment of States such as a Sahalian, a small island developing country and a land-locked country. Jarraud is selling the WCC3 by reminding Heads of State that if they save their message for COP 15 in Copenhagen, their voice will be one of hundreds, whereas if they attend the WCC3 they will have a focused, attentive global platform that precedes the COP. He is working his extensive connections, and expects the President of Iceland and the Prince of Orange (Netherlands) to attend. He is also fairly certain that a member of the Spanish Royal family and the Prince of Monaco will also participate. The Presidents of Burkino Faso and Mali have indicated their interest, as well as a Chinese Vice-Premier with the meteorology portfolio. He confessed that he is lacking at present high-level representation from Latin America. Secretary General Ban will open the WCC3.

Group Earth Observations

16. Jarraud noted that the Group Earth Observations (GEO) and the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) greatly benefited from the advocacy of former NOAA Administrator Lautenbacher, and feared that their future was uncertain in the absence of a strong proponent. He thought GEO had raised the visibility of the need for earth observations, but that it has not succeeded in generating additional data and has so far fallen short of its goal of

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supporting new observations. Jarraud gave full credit to GEO for spawning the WMO Observation Program, which he feels is successful.

A Global Environment Organization?

17. Discussion on the idea of a Global Environment Organization came about as Jarraud noted that the WCC3 is not so much a WMO conference as one that represents multi-stakeholders from the UN as well as NGOs, the private sector and academia. Jarraud flatly stated that he is not a proponent of a UN Environment Organization. He explained that, in thinking about the challenge of coordinating UN organizations he characterizes each of them - FAO, WHO, UNESCO, etc. - as a "column." The challenge of UN coordination, he says, is a "matrix managing problem that would not be solved by changing the topology of the problem; by exchanging columns for lines," as a unified Global Environment Organization would do. He went on to say that UN coordination would be better served by identifying the weakest points and the programs that should be strengthened. He noted that linking some of the multilateral environmental agreements and having fewer secretariats would strengthen environmental governance.

18. Still echoing the underlying theme of WCC3 as a conference for decision-makers, Jarraud went on to opine that it is important to separate the task of decision-making from the task of supporting the decision-maker, i.e. the provider of the information; these areas should be "complementary, but not overlapping." He gave the example of the IPCC - a support group, which is not part of the UNFCCC - a decision group, noting that had they been integrated climate skeptics would have had a target; when, in fact, the separation has allowed the IPCC to work with credibility and acclaim.

GEO Thoughts on WCC3

19. Reifsnnyder also met with GEO Director, Jose Achache who noted that without strong U.S. leadership GEO might eventually be dropped in favor of GEOSS, which is seeing steady contributions from the EU and, he predicted, "may become an EU/Africa/Chinese project."

110. Regarding the WCC3, Achache emphasized that the proposed deliverable should reinforce GEO activities rather than duplicate them. WCC3 is focusing on climate services at the regional and near-term scale. Achache pointed to the need for shared data in

order to make more accurate seasonal data and questioned whether many countries were willing to share data for regional forecasting. In the absence of a better data stream, Achache questioned WMO's ability to produce more accurate seasonal forecasting for decision-makers. He went on to say, "Our capacity to predict 12 months ahead is probably as good as an economist's, but politicians influence economics more than climate." Reifsnyder pointed out that people understand every-day weather forecasting and even the long-term climate predictions of the IPCC, but the WCC3's focus on seasonal and near-term forecasting was necessary to bridge the gap between weather and climate. He encouraged Achache to think in terms of a seasonal climate information product - for example, a regional climate almanac - that could be easily accessed and applied locally by farmers and other decision-makers whose very reliance on the product would reinforce funding for GEO and other climate programs and, consequently, more accurate forecasting.

Comment

¶11. As SecGen Jarraud notes, WCC3 will be a WMO hosted event but is entirely cross-cutting in nature. It will succeed if it attracts high-level participants from multiple disciplines, not just met services or environment ministers, although these may be in the majority. Jarraud is also canny in his observation that Heads of State/Government and other high-level reps have a golden opportunity in WCC3 to get this message across because the field will be much smaller than at the Copenhagen Climate Conference in December and the timing - on the way to Copenhagen - will be auspicious.
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